

# RELIGIOUS INQUIRER.

COME NOW, AND LET US REASON TOGETHER.—ISAIAH 1. 18.

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## ON THE DIFFICULTIES AND DISCOURAGEMENTS, WHICH ATTEND THE STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

*(Continued from page 177.)*

My second argument then is this ; that a painful, exact, impartial study of the scriptures will by some be thought not only to do no good, but also a great deal of hurt, both to the public, and to yourself.

*First.* It will do hurt to the public. It will disturb the peace of the church, and that cannot but have a malignant influence on the state.

It is certain that disputes in the church disturb the peace of it ; and it is as certain these disputes have been generally raised by men pretending to a superior knowledge of the scriptures, and to discoveries that have escaped others. The scriptures have always been made this use of by the heretics of old ; and it is the character of the great heretics of this and the last age, who have set up for a free and impartial search into the literal sense of the scriptures above the rest of the christian world. But with what success? They have purchased their pretended knowledge of the scriptures at the expense of their reputation, and their study has destroyed their orthodoxy. And were not their books and opinions carefully suppressed, and their persons rendered odious to the people, who knows what disturbances they might have created to the church? On the other hand, the peace the church has enjoyed for many years, among its own members, seems to be owing to no one thing more, than to a general neglect of this study ; and the dangers, that at present threaten its tranquility, come wholly from men, who have endeavored to revive a study that has so often proved pernicious to its peace.

Nor can it well be otherwise ; for what security has a man that sets out in this way ; that attempts to study the scriptures in a free and impartial manner, laying aside all prepossessions and previous notions, resolving to see with his own eyes, and judge for himself, and to believe nothing that he is not upon his own search convinced is clearly contained in them?—What security has such a man, that he shall not fall into some opinions that have been already condemned as erroneous and heretical, or which may interfere with those that are commonly received ; which, if they do not immediately strike at any fundamental point, yet will be thought to do so ; and may have a tendency to put scruples into weak minds, and to disturb the peace of the church, by raising doubts about the meaning or truth of some articles, or by asserting that an explicit belief of them is not necessary? It is natural for curious and inquisitive minds to deviate from the common road, and the examples are so many, that it would be tedious to add more, unless you had more lead in your constitution, or a more refined understanding, than any curious man ever had yet ; otherwise you cannot be sure, that you shall not study yourself into doubts at least, if not into opposite opinions concerning some received notions. You will doubt perhaps of the authority or author of some canonical book, and think perhaps that some passages are interpolated, or that some celebrated texts are not genuine, or should be otherwise read, or have not been rightly understood, or do

not prove the point they are commonly brought for. You may fall into notions that will be thought tending to Arianism, or the like ; you may reject arguments brought from the Old Testament, to prove the trinity, as trifling, and proving nothing but the ignorance of those that make use of them. You may think a prophecy has a literal meaning, where commonly the mystical is thought the only one. You may think that many texts in the New Testament, which are strong against the Socinians, do not prove against the Arian notion. That the title, Son of God, has not always one uniform meaning in the Gospel ; and that that single expression, of itself, is no proof of any thing in God analogous to generation in men. That the identical consubstantiality of the Son, the eternal procession of the Spirit, and many other notions relating to the trinity, though they may be true in themselves, are not so in virtue of the texts alleged for them. These notions learned men have fallen into ; and from thence it is to be presumed, you will not easily keep clear of them. I choose to instance chiefly in matters relating to the trinity, because it is the controversy now on foot ; but the like may be said on many other articles ; in each of which the truth is but one, but the errors infinite ; and there is hardly any notion, with respect to any of them, which some learned man, by following his own private judgment, instead of taking the doctrine of the church for his guide, has not fallen into.

Now, if you should study yourself into any new opinions, or into old ones that have been condemned, what will you do? Will you keep them to yourself, or publish them? Or shall I rather say, it is no question.—The authors of new notions are apt to be very fond of them ; they think it barbarous and cruel, to stifle the infant in its birth. There is a secret pleasure in singularity ; to differ from the vulgar is, in appearance, to be above them ; and to be distinguished from the herd, is too great a temptation to be easily resisted. But, had you prudence enough to govern your ambition, conscience may come in here, and make you do what ambition could not. The truths, you think you have discovered, either are, or will be thought by you, of too much importance to the honor of God and the good of religion, to be concealed. You will look on them as the blessings of God on your studies ; and think it a capital crime to extinguish the light, and suppress the knowledge he has imparted to you. In short, you will think yourself under the highest obligation not to dissemble in religious matters, and conceal, from the church of God, opinions which you are convinced are not only true, but of great service to it. Let me then conclude, that the novel or revived opinions, which your study leads you into, will be published to the world ; what now will be the consequence? Certain mischief, but no certain good at all. No good, I say ; for possibly your notions may be wrong, or not of consequence ; and, whether they are or not, the presumption against you will be so strong, that your notions will not be received, and perhaps not examined ; they will be condemned as novel notions, or as exploded ones ; and, whatever you advance, it will be thought a certain proof of its being of no consequence, that in so many ages it has never been received. There is no room therefore to expect, that what you advance should be received, or do any good. But the mischief is sure and certain ; it will raise scruples in weak, unstable minds, sap the foundations of the orthodox faith, and give a handle to skeptical men ; who, because some things are called into doubt (though incidental matters only, and of little conse-

quence,) will think they have a right from thence to question every thing. Thus the church and established faith will suffer by the scruples put into its friends, and the handle given to its enemies. And, when religious disputes are begun, designing men know how to intermix affairs of state with them : and then nobody knows where they will end, or what mischiefs they may not do. Whereas, if you can be content to go in the beaten road ; if you will implicitly submit to the received notions, and humbly think the judgment of the church, where it is not the same, better than your own, you will be out of harm's way, and neither hurt the church, nor yourself.

*Secondly*, I add yourself, as another motive that ought to have great weight with you in this question ; for you cannot disturb the peace of the church, without being greatly a sufferer yourself. If you really do not disturb its peace, it is all one, you will be interpreted to do it, and that will bring on you more evils than I would wish to my greatest enemy. In a word, you will be thought a *heretic* ; a term, which there is a strange magic in, though it has no determinate meaning in the mouth of the people, nor any ill meaning in itself. It is supposed to include in it every thing that is bad ; it makes every thing appear odious and deformed ; it dissolves all friendships, extinguishes all former kind sentiments, however just and well deserved ; and, from the time a man is deemed a heretic, it is charity to act against all rules of charity ; and, the more they violate the laws of God in dealing with him, it is, in their opinion, doing God the greater service.

That you may not think this is said at random, purely to frighten you into a compliance with me ; let me desire you to consider seriously the natural consequences of being under the imputation of heresy. And the first I would observe is, that, from the moment your people have this opinion of you, you are incapacitated from working much good upon them ; and that, I am sure, so good a man as you are, must think to be a great evil. While they think you orthodox, your virtuous and inoffensive behaviour, your strict sobriety and temperance, your affable and familiar manner of conversing with them, your generous and charitable regard to those who are sick or in distress ; these good qualities, joined to your plain and easy, but affectionate and moving manner of instructing them, have a mighty influence, and you may lead them as you please ; they admire and endeavor to imitate your good example ; your virtuous conduct is a constant, though tacit, reproof when they do amiss ; the very sight of you is a lecture of virtue to them ; and the influence you have already had, in the little time you have been among them, is too visible to be denied. But, from the time you are called heretic, much of the good, you could have done, is at an end. Those, who before had a secret veneration of you, think it their duty to defame and injure you ; your virtue they call hypocrisy, your humility spiritual pride ; they look on you as an abandoned wretch ; that God has withdrawn his grace, and that the devil is at the bottom of all you have been doing ; that nothing can better testify their orthodoxy, than to throw off all regard both to your doctrine and example ; and, for fear they should seem to be infected with your errors, they will return to the vices you had persuaded them to leave ; and, for the future, will take effectual care not to be the better for you.

Nobody can do much good, whom the people do not think a good man ; and that cannot be expected, when so much reproach and infamy will, right or wrong be heaped on you, if you do not continue orthodox. And this you cannot doubt, if you will but reflect on what passes under your own eyes ; and therefore it is in vain to fancy your virtue will protect you. No, the most conspicuous virtue will not be believed. If you are guilty of no open vices, secret ones will be imputed to you ; your inquiries will be called vain, curious, and forbidden studies. Pride and ambition will be said to be the secret springs of them ; a search after truth will be called a love of novelty ; the

doubting of a single text will be skepticism ; the denial of an argument, a renouncing of the faith. To say what the scriptures have said, and in the very same words too, if not explained in the common way, will be blasphemy ; and the most sincere concern for the honor of Almighty God, you cannot be sure, will not be interpreted downright atheism. Every thing you say, or do, will have a wrong turn given it. A slip of memory shall be made wilful pervariation ; a mistake in a citation shall be forgery and corruption ; an error, in an incidental point of learning, shall be a good proof that you know nothing. Every inaccurate expression shall be pressed into a crime ; any little warmth of temper shall be aggravated into pride and positiveness, into a contempt of authority and ill manners. In short, all the indiscretions of a man's former life shall be ripped up ; and nothing forgiven, that can be remembered or strained to his disadvantage. And where is the man that can be fond of such usage ? For my part, I am free to declare, I am afraid I should not have virtue or courage enough to undergo such a fiery trial.

Now all this a man will draw upon himself, that brings himself under the imputation of heresy. Whereas the orthodox man lives quiet and at ease, unmolested and unenvied. His faults (and who has not some ?) shall be extenuated or excused, if not quite buried in oblivion ; his want of temper shall be a commendable zeal ; his indiscretion, good nature ; his mistakes shall be imputed to haste or inadvertency ; and, when they cannot be defended, it will be argued in his favor, that the greatest men sometimes err, and the writers of the first rank are not always in the right ; or perhaps a mistake shall turn to his advantage ; it will be shown to be an error on the right side, and that a good cause drew him into it. His learning, on the other hand, shall be magnified beyond measure ; every body will be full of his good qualities, and his virtues shall be set in the best light to show themselves and cover his faults. In a word, orthodoxy atones for all vices, and heresy extinguishes all virtues. That this is nothing but the bare truth, I appeal to what you every day hear and see yourself.

(To be continued.)

From the (Boston) Universalist Magazine.

(LETTER 3.)

Bellingham, ———, 1823.

#### TO THE MINISTERS AND MEMBERS OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

DEAR BRETHREN,

In my last, I gave you my views of the doctrine of the TRINITY : I now proceed to examine other dogmas of your Church, which I consider equally erroneous ; and which I think are so intimately connected with the above named doctrine, that they cannot be supported without it. I shall first make some remarks on infinite and vicarious atonement, and the infinite evil of sin. 2d. I shall examine the UNMERCIFUL doctrine of ENDLESS MISERY. When the doctrine of the TRINITY had once become a popular doctrine of the Christian Church ; and was established as an article of her faith ; each person in the Godhead had a particular character assigned him. The Father was a Monarch full of justice and vengeance : The Son was the Creator full of mercy and love : The Holy Ghost proceeded from both Father and Son, and seemed to partake of the nature of both ; and his office was to obey them, and execute their designs. When it was admitted that the Son was co-equal and co-eternal with the Father ; and as occasion required, the Father himself, and that he died to atone for the sins, original and actual, of the whole world, and suffered for and instead of mankind, it followed that the atonement was both infinite and vicarious. The doctrine of the infinite evil of sin ; probably grew out of aff-



nite atonement. If the atonement had been considered infinite and sin finite, one would have borne no proportion to the other; and theologians in order to keep up a show of consistency, affirmed that sin was an infinite evil, because it was committed against an infinite Being. I know of but one preacher, however, in your church, the Rev. T. M. who believes the Deity suffered in the work of redemption, although it seems impossible, consistently to avoid such a belief, if Christ did; and Christ be the Deity as you affirm. We cannot believe that God suffered, because suffering implies imperfection. If only a finite being suffered, the atonement could not be infinite. God could not suffer; and if an atonement was made, it was made by a finite being, therefore the atonement was not infinite; and if mankind suffer for the sins which they commit, the atonement is not vicarious—mankind do suffer for their sins, therefore the atonement is neither infinite nor vicarious. The argument that sin is infinite, because it is committed against an infinite law, or an infinite Being, is so silly that a child ought to be ashamed of it. By the same reasoning we should say that all our acts are infinite, as they all have a reference to God some way or other; they being all consistent with, or contrary to the eternal rule of right.—No finite being can do an infinite act—man is finite, sin is an act of his, therefore sin is not infinite. This brings me secondly, to an examination of the *doctrine of Endless Punishment*.

If I were to admit the doctrine of infinite and vicarious atonement with the infinite evil of sin, I could not avoid the doctrine of Universalism; for if sin were an infinite evil, and the atonement were infinite and vicarious; if Christ died for and instead of the transgressor, and answered the demands of the law for and in his stead, why does he stand in jeopardy every hour? Is he not safe? I will not however take the advantage of an absurdity, believed by an opponent to refute another absurdity believed by him. I have conscientiously given you my reasons for rejecting several of your articles of faith; and I shall now candidly give you my reasons for rejecting the popular doctrine of *Endless Misery*, and consequently embracing that of Universal Happiness. I have already proved that sin is not infinite; therefore it cannot deserve infinite punishment. God is just, and will proportion the punishment to the offence; therefore the doctrine of endless punishment is false. I know you reject with a just abhorrence the doctrine of particular and individual *election and reprobation*, but I confess I was never able to see the great difference you talk of between foreknowledge and decrees. It is impossible there should be any contingences with Omniscience. I am confident that you will not allow God ever made one soul to be endlessly miserable; but if any ever should be, I can very easily prove that he made them for that express purpose. There are two ways in which you try to prove that notwithstanding multitudes will be irrevocably lost, that God did not make them for that purpose, but to be saved; both of which I shall examine and refute.

1st. you say that his knowledge has nothing to do with their conduct, and you endeavor to illustrate and prove it by the following simile:—You say a man looks out of his window and sees another man walking along the street past him: Now you add, the first man's seeing the other walk was not the cause of his walking, but the contrary; the last one's walking was the cause of the first one's seeing him walk: So you say, that the sinner's going to hell is the reason why God sees him go there, his knowledge being founded on our conduct. What you say of the men is true, but when you apply it to the Deity and his creatures, it is a mere sophism. The first man did not create the other nor give him his ability to walk past his house, therefore it is not an ingenuous argument. Before God made man he knew what he would do;—he knew whether he would be endlessly miserable or happy: He gave him all his moral and physical powers, and if they lead him to

*endless misery*, he knew they would, and gave them to him for that purpose. I beseech you candidly to weigh the following arguments and see whether you are able to answer them. The President of the United States possesses creative power and infinite wisdom:—he informs the Members of Congress that he will make a rational immortal being, to go to the south pole where he is to enjoy perpetual felicity,—the day of creation arrives, the creature is made—he is told where he must go to be happy—power is given him to go there; he is told if he goes to the north pole, he will be confined in endless misery—he is then left at liberty to go where he pleases, and he goes directly to the north pole, and is shut up in endless night. The members of Congress ask the President if he knew the creature he made would go to the north pole, and be miserable; the answer is yes, I knew it;—and did you make him to go there? No—I made him to go to the south pole, where I intended he should enjoy perpetual happiness, but you see he has frustrated my gracious design concerning him; for he has gone to the north pole and is shut up in everlasting despair. Now I ask, would the Members of Congress be such dupes as to believe him? Would they believe that the president knowing that he would go to the north pole and be miserable, made him to go to the south and be happy? Would they not think all his professions of love a mere cheat?—Could they believe he made him to be happy, when he knew he never would be; but on the contrary, knew he would be miserable? I ask further, could they think the President a good man, in exerting his power to make a being who he knew would, and consequently designed should be miserable? Would a farmer raise animals, knowing they would not answer the purpose for which he designed them, nor indeed any valuable purpose? Would the manufacturer manufacture goods to sell when he knew he could never sell them, but should lose them and all his labor? Would the Missionaries go to India to preach to the Indians, if they knew they should do them no good, but should be the means of making them more wretched than they are? Would any of you, my brethren, purchase an article knowing that it would not answer the purpose for which you purchased it? Can you think, then, that God made men to go to heaven when he knew they would never go there. Do you think he is less wise or less consistent than yourselves? I trust you are satisfied if God knew any would be miserable before he made them he could not have made them for happiness, and as he could not have made them for happiness, and as he could not have been indifferent, but must have had some design in making them, he must have made them for misery,—and if he made them for misery, he is a wicked Being, and deserves to be hated by all his offspring; and the Calvinists are justifiable in desiring to dethrone him.—What benevolent mind, but would wish them success?

There is another way in which you endeavor to clear the Deity of blame in sending men into everlasting misery. You say there may be contingences with Omniscience; and to illustrate it, you say that God has created thousands of worlds, but there is room for millions more. Now you add, Omnipotence only implies power that can do all things possible to be done, and not power that does all possible things. So say you Omniscience only implies wisdom that *can* know all things, and not wisdom that *does* know all things. This also is a subtle sophism, a mere subterfuge, well calculated to deceive the artless. You say there is room for more worlds, and that God can make more, but how do you know it? The whole force of your argument rests on what you have taken for granted, which is not self-evident and which you cannot prove. The scriptures say, "known unto him are all his works from the beginning;" and the prophecies of the Old and New Testaments, give us all possible reason to believe that God is not ignorant of what is in futurity. Wisdom is the fullness of the Godhead and the essence of the Divine nature: It is that attribute of the Deity, by which he is directed in all his works. Wisdom must say, what must be left un-

done, and what is proper to be done, and Omniscience must obey its mandate, otherwise inconsistent things might be done by Jehovah!! God's ignorance of what will take place in futurity, does not place his character in a more amiable light, than if he knew and designed it. There is not much to choose between an ignorant God and a wicked one, especially if the ignorant one might know if he would. One suffers his offspring to be lost, because he has no disposition to save them, and the other because he does not know they will be, and is too indolent to exercise the wisdom and power, which he possesses to make them happy. Permit me to say, my brethren, that although I am a mortal enemy to Calvinism, I do think it more philosophical than Arminianism; and so far as the two doctrines relate to the character of the Deity, I can see nothing to choose between them.

I come now in a more particular manner to offer you some of my reasons for embracing the doctrine of the final Happiness of all men. "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."—How could the angel say, "to all people," if but a part only would be benefitted by the gospel. "The Father sent not the Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world thro' him might be saved.—For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.—For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.—For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.—The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.—For he hath put all things under his feet.—And when all things shall be subdued unto him [mind, unto him,] then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him, [observe the same words, unto him,] that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.—And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven.—That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.—That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth even in him.—For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.—And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, blessing and honor, and glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.—God is Love.—There is no fear in Love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment.—He that feareth is not made perfect in love." These texts of scripture which I have quoted, I candidly think, prove to a demonstration, and beyond the possibility of contradiction, the final happiness of all men. The bible never contradicts itself, and if the happiness of all men can be proved by it,—endless misery cannot. As to those texts which *partialists* quote to prove that innumerable multitudes will be inevitably lost, I can easily prove they have been all wretchedly perverted, & have no reference to any transactions beyond this world.—Take a short explanation of Mat. xxv. 46, "And these shall go away," &c. Our Lord's prophetic discourse in the 24th & 25th chapters, is founded on a question proposed by the disciples. "Tell us, when shall these things be," &c. The conjunctions and adverbs are so used in these chapters as to make it next to impossible for an intelligent unprejudiced mind to carry these scenes there described beyond the destruction of Jerusalem. Christ had said in the 25th chapter, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate," &c. The question of the disciples was founded on that remark: They wished to know when the Temple and City would be destroyed, and what would be the signs that should precede it, and the end of the world, or of the Jewish dispensation. Christ immediately gives them a most sublime & awful descrip-

tion of that dreadful event,—& he says in the 34th verse of the 24th chapter, "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away, till all these things be fulfilled." The 25th commences with "Then," at that time, and the connexion is kept up to the end of the chapter.—That generation passed away almost 1800 years ago, and there is no other alternative, but ingeniously to acknowledge that the events described in these chapters, were fulfilled before that generation passed away, or that Christ was a false prophet. I should be glad to say more on this and similar texts that have been quoted to prove the doctrine of endless misery, but I have not room in this letter: I pray you to examine the scriptures for yourselves; it is possible you are in an error. "Perfect love casteth out fear." Is it possible to believe the doctrine of endless misery, and not tremble with fear? Who would be safe? Who could enjoy perfect love, and view themselves and all their tender and beloved connexions exposed to endless ruin every moment? O my brethren, I hardly know how to bid you adieu: I wish I could see you all face to face; and answer your every objection to God's free unbounded and impartial LOVE to mankind. You think it impossible that a man who has committed but one sin and dies without a supernatural conversion should be saved; yet you think a man may live to be old and sin all his days, and repent a few hours before death and go to heaven. You think a man may commit many murders and live a few years, and repent and be saved, yet if a man commits one murder and has no opportunity to repent here, he cannot be saved. You ought to be careful how you limit the mercy of God or bound his goodness by earth's contracted span. He is unchangeable and will be the same benevolent Being in the world to which we are hastening, that he is here. The popular theories of the various partialists or believers in endless misery seem to me to amount to the following: God existed one eternity alone, and then made angels pure and holy;—one of them became unholy, being moved to sin by a holy principle inherent in his holy nature, and drew a multitude of his holy brethren after him, and was cast out of heaven into a lake burning with brimstone, and there confined. God at length made the earth, and created a man and woman and placed them on it to till the ground:—He planted a garden with a variety of fruit trees, and gave them liberty to eat of all except one, which he forbid them to touch on pain of death. They being holy had no disposition to disobey, and lest they should not, the Lord sent or permitted to go (which is the same thing) the angel which he had some time before cast out of heaven, to tempt them to transgress his law. This wicked angel took possession of the body of a snake, or according to Adam Clark, a monkey, and watched his opportunity when the woman was alone, and persuaded her to eat an apple, cherry or peach. She finding that the fruit was good and had made her wise, like a good wife carried some to her husband and his eyes were opened also, and they both became as gods knowing good from evil. The Father was about to punish them according to his word, but his Son offered to die in their stead,—the offer was accepted, the Son died,—the purchased reconciliation has been made known, man continues dead in trespasses and sins, and goes astray from the womb, and naturally hates God and all good. Yet lest he should be saved, Beelzebub and a host of subordinate devils are permitted to wander about and counteract the various designs of the Son. Almighty power sometimes prevails and snatches here and there a solitary individual from the verge of endless ruin, but original sin and the devil are generally too strong for Omnipotence, and the greatest part of mankind are hurried by them thro' this wicked world down, down, down to the chambers of endless night, where the vengeance of the God of infinite love and mercy, is wreaked upon them to endless ages; while devils sport themselves with their groans and lamentations; the God of tender compassion laughs at their calamity—heaven resounds with the praise of Jehovah for his infinite goodness for saving a few, when Christ made a vicarious atone-



ment for all. The saints look down from the battlements of heaven, and shout forth transporting songs of victory, and make the heavenly arches ring with loud acclamations of joy, that they have escaped the demerit of their crimes, and that while their fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, beloved friends and relatives are wrapt up in the keenest despair, they are safe & happy!!! O my brethren, do not let the chimeras of a too warm imagination deceive you. Universalism is not that licentious doctrine, you think it is. It does not give men the least license to sin. It teaches that no man can transgress the eternal rule of right with impunity. It teaches that every man will be punished and rewarded according to his works: It teaches that God will by no means clear the guilty: It teaches that the government of God is purely parental and that all punishment is disciplinary, and designed to reclaim the offender. I do not believe the doctrine of endless misery ever made any one any better. Slaves are not so likely to be virtuous as freemen. I expect my name will be cast out as evil, for believing that all men will be saved; but when I read that the last enemy shall be destroyed, which is death, how can I believe that there will still remain innumerable beings, enemies to God and themselves, suffering the pains of eternal death, when death is destroyed and no enemies are left. I only believe your prayers will be answered. You pray that all may be saved, and I believe they will. So long as I honestly believe the doctrine of Universal Salvation, I shall endeavor zealously to inculcate and spread it among my fellow men, regardless of the threats and anathemas of bigoted zealots. My prayer to God is, that Israel may be saved, and I believe they will. Yes, I believe the time will come when all the human family will be made virtuous and happy, and enter one temple and worship one God, and chant one song of universal praise to Jehovah forever and ever. Transporting, delicious thought! Universal Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will to men! I bid you adieu, but it is only for a little season—we shall shortly see eye to eye, when none will be left to say, know ye the Lord, for all shall know him from the least to the greatest. While I honestly beseech you to think on what I have written, I subscribe myself yours most affectionately.

ELIPHALET CASE, JUN.

#### COMMUNICATIONS.

FOR THE INQUIRER.

#### THE MORALITY OF THE GOSPEL; OR THE IMMORAL TENDENCY OF CALVINISM. NO. 17.

Among the duties enjoined by Calvinism, or which according to that system constitute one of the means of salvation, we observed in our last number, that sound and orthodox faith, claims the first rank. We have nothing to add on this point, and will proceed to notice what we consider the second peculiar duty of Calvinism: This is *religious worship*, or an attention to the rights, forms and ceremonies of religion. This duty is more complex and extensive than the first, as it comprises a great variety of acts and services, which it cannot be necessary particularly to detail, as almost every person must be familiar with them. The most important are an attention, to the routine of public and private worship, regularly attending all religious meetings and conferences, contributing liberally to the support of the ministry; aiding, with the purse and personal exertions, all religious societies; the encouragement and promotion of all real or pretended religious objects, particularly the cause of foreign and domestic missions and the various schemes and exertions set on foot to spread the Gospel, and christianize the heathen abroad, and to produce awakenings and make persons religious at home. All these things, may be, and many of them un-

doubtedly are, good in their place; but the question is whether they constitute the *essential requirements* of christianity. If Christ had taught a religion of forms, ceremonies and observances, it is clear that they would. But instead of this, as we have had occasion frequently to observe, it was *these things* which he condemned in the Scribes and Pharisees, as having corrupted and destroyed all true piety and active goodness. The religion he taught was *opposed* to this system of forms, rites and dogmas; his doctrines were the most simple imaginable; they consisted of *moral purity and rectitude*, the seat of his religion was the heart and the understanding; it was calculated to improve the one and enlighten the other. It was not because the forms of religion, are an evil in themselves, that they were condemned, but because with the Pharisees, they had superseded its essential obligations and corrupted its purity, the shadow had taken the place of the substance.

Is not this the case of all modern Pharisees? who profess a religion without virtue; who have corrupted christianity by converting it into a system of forms, and gorgeous pageantry; who suppose that God will have sacrifice and not mercy; who are scrupulous to pay tithes, but neglect justice and judgment; who take the highest seats in the synagogues, make broad their phylacteries, and pray in the corner of the streets to be seen of men; who make a great noise about religion and are extremely anxious about the piety of their neighbours,—contribute liberally to the maintenance of the clergy and the support of missions, but drive the wretched object of charity from their doors, without a heart to sympathise in its distresses, or a hand to relieve its wants. The visible forms of religion are not to be despised, unless they are perverted; they are at best however, the body and not the soul of piety; they may be a means, but can never be an end. They possess no "soul of goodness" in themselves; and hence as no religious rites were instituted by Christ, one system may be as good as another, as none are of any use any further than they contribute to influence the moral sentiments. The more simple and intelligible however, the better. If religion, as we have attempted to shew, consists of a principle of goodness in the heart, of love to God and man, evinced by the fruits of righteousness and peace, humanity and benevolence, then no system of rituals and observances, or 'form of goodness' can constitute religion. And aside from the authority of scripture, may we not ask, *qui bono? what good* can they afford? And if they are without goodness in them, can they form any essential part of religion? So far as they are a means of goodness they are useful, but when they are relied upon not as a means but as an end, they often become an insuperable obstacle to the attainment of true piety; the devotee, having grasped at the shadow and holding it fast, the substance is suffered to escape him.

And if an observance of the forms of religious worship does not constitute religion, neither does *faith* however orthodox it may be; for salvation is of grace; and what if some do not believe? shall their unbelief make the grace of God of no effect? Faith, like worship is of no importance or efficacy in itself, either as a means of salvation or of happiness in this life. What merit or goodness is there in a person's abstract belief on religious subjects; any more than his opinions concerning astronomy or natural philosophy? If his belief produces no effect on his conduct, it is inoperative and entirely nugatory; it is of no more importance to the person himself or any body else, than would be the belief of a statue of brass, were it possible for that to possess any. Reason dictates this, and scripture confirms it, as we are told that faith without works is dead. A thing when dead, ceases to exist; a dead faith therefore is no faith at all, that is, it has none of the living and beneficial properties of faith. Faith is no father valuable than it tends, to produce moral purity and good works, the fruits of love to God and good will to man.

Neither faith or worship constitutes religion, nor both

united. What then is their use? We have already observed that they may be a means of goodness: But if they do not constitute any essential part of religion how can they conduce to it? There is but one way, which is the influence they may have *on our own heart and understanding*. Faith in the goodness of God, in his more than parental care and love towards his creatures, must tend to produce divine love in our hearts, resignation to his holy will and acquiescence in his overruling providence. The visible forms and worship of religion may be a source of instruction, and also conduce to inspire correct sentiments towards God and our fellow creatures. True piety being an internal principle of goodness, which produces the fruits of love and benevolence, and not an external robe of righteousness, the only means by which a person can acquire religion, are such as conduce to that object. Hence then, it is only by enlightening the understanding, and mending the heart, that a person can become more pious or more virtuous, a better christian or a better man. All the means therefore of religious instruction, and every description of religious worship which do not conduce to these objects are thrown away; they can do no good, but may produce much evil as we have heretofore endeavored to shew, by depraving the moral sense, and give rise to false notions as to our duty to God and our fellow creatures. Here then, we can discover a fundamental error in modern divinity. According to that, religion instead of being regarded as an internal principle of goodness and benevolence which forms as it were, a part of our moral constitution, which is always present with us, and constantly exerts a salutary influence on our conduct, is considered as a mysterious thing, abstract, and extrinsic, existing without ourselves, a great way off, in heaven or somewhere else. It is regarded as an *acquisition*, and hence the orthodox speak of acquiring an interest in heaven or in Christ. It is also considered in the light of a *treaty or compact*, between the Creator and the creature, and hence it is a common thing for clergymen to exhort their hearers *to make their peace with God*. It is supposed to be a mysterious something, which changes a man's relation to his Creator; which produces a reconciliation between them, and induces God to love the sinner whom he before hated.

According to these notions, the operation of religion is almost entirely on God; it is to produce a change in his dispositions towards his creatures, to appease his wrath, render him placable, and conciliate his favour. Religious worship is considered entirely in this light; it is not supposed to have any effect on the worshipper, but is regarded as a *service rendered to God*; it is to please him and ingratiate ourselves into his favour. What can be more preposterous or anti-christian? Is not this religious worship the same in principle, as that of the heathen who attempted to propitiate their angry Deities, by incense burnt upon their altars, and the blood of bulls and goats offered in sacrifice? It is not material what the offering is, whether the incense of spices or of adulation, whether the blood of the victim, or the agonies of the reprobate, if it is supposed by the devotee that it is pleasing to God and will tend to propitiate his favour, and is offered with such motives the worship is the same. It is not the less heathenish because it is called christian, nor because it is offered in christian churches instead of pagan temples. It is evident that a religion the only object and end of which is to please God and ingratiate ourselves into his favour, can have but little if any influence on the moral conduct of mankind. It is altogether abstract; it does not come home to men's "bosoms & business;" it only "plays round the head but does not reach the heart." It can have no influence, certainly no favourable influence on the moral sentiments, principles or actions of mankind; it is not calculated or intended to inspire us with love for our fellow creatures, or to regulate our conduct with one and another. And hence, from the influence of such absurd sentiments, it has been, and is still maintained that a person may be a *good christian* without being a *good man*. And history abundantly proves, from

the days of Thomas A. Becket to those of John Calvin, and from the latter to priest Norton, that men, who have been most zealous for the cause of christianity, the most scrupulously orthodox, and the most rigid in attention to religious forms and observances, have been characterized by injustice and cruelty; fraud, deceit, craft, violence, bloodshed and every evil work. How is this phenomenon explained? Were men of this character christians? if so then the fruits of christianity are injustice and violence. But we are told that its fruits are peace & righteousness. The only explanation the case admits of is, that the religion of those blind bigots, and all religion which does not produce *good works*, and shew itself in the conduct of its professors, which does not conduce to morality, virtue and benevolence, is a perversion of christianity, a blind and pernicious superstition, which instead of recognizing the morality of the gospel as its basis, often eradicates every principle of goodness from the heart, and substitutes to the plain and simple maxims of moral duty, artificial distinctions of right and wrong, and the wild chimeras of error, delusion and superstition. We conclude the subject with the present number, having extended it much beyond our original intentions, although by no means exhausted it. We close with a brief recapitulation. We have endeavored to shew that the precepts, measures and moral doctrines taught by Christ, which we have denominated the morality of the gospel, comprise the religion of Jesus and the essential requirements and obligations of christianity; which is a religion of practical goodness.—That the morality of christianity is built on the same basis as natural morality, and that if it differs in principle it is by requiring good actions from purer and holier motives; that true religion must recognize the great principles of moral obligation, and consequently confirms and strengthens moral principles by adding its sanctions; and on the other hand, that false religion or superstition, which is not founded on the principles of natural or gospel morality, must in all cases tend to weaken and impair moral obligation, and often to corrupt the very fountains of moral purity. We have examined the moral, or rather the immoral tendency of that prevailing system of religion called Calvinistic, and have considered the influence on society, on the lives and conduct of its professors of its leading doctrines, and of its *spirit* and general character, and concluded by noticing some of its prominent duties or requirements either as a means of salvation or as conducing to happiness in this life. If in every stage of this inquiry the moral tendency of this system has appeared unfavourable, and some of its doctrines dangerous and pernicious, we hope it will not be thought, the picture has been overcharged, or that we have viewed the subject with a jaundiced eye which could discover only its blemishes and deformities. We are unconscious of having 'set down aught in malice,' and believe that had we been disposed, we could not have added to the deformities of this system, being persuaded we could not have invented one that would be so entirely inconsistent with, and subversive of, the fundamental principles of christian morality, and of the spirit of that religion which was to bring peace on earth and good will to men.

T.

## FOR THE INQUIRER.

## "THE CHRISTIAN ALMANACK."

We are told by the editor of the Christian Almanack that about 40,000 copies of it were sold the past year, and that it was probably read by 160,000 individuals—that the profits of the sale "have enabled the Tract Society greatly to enlarge their field of usefulness."—The editor says, "We would labor and pray for the rapid approach of that period when all who love the Saviour, and are loved by him, shall also love one another; and when small differences of belief shall be forgotten in the mighty enterprise of reforming the world."

## QUERIES, &amp;c.

1. Who are they who love the Saviour and are loved



by him? Are they not those who are engaged in printing and circulating Christian Almanacks and Tracts? Are they not those who "would labor and pray for the approach of that period when all, who love the Saviour and are loved by him, shall also love one another?" If not, then the editor of the Christian Almanack, and his coadjutors "in the mighty enterprise of reforming the world," do not love the Saviour, and are not loved by him. But, if "those who love the Saviour and are loved by him" be the editor of the Christian Almanack and his coadjutors "in the mighty enterprise of reforming the world," (with Almanacks, Tracts, &c. &c.) then, according to the professed purposes for which said editor and his coadjutors "labor and pray," they do not, at present, love one another; for, if "they who love the Saviour and are loved by him" do now love one another, why do they labor and pray for "the rapid approach of that period?"

It may reasonably be supposed that the spirit which actuated the editor in publishing the "Christian Almanack" is generated, or excited, to a greater or less degree, in the purchasers and readers of it. If so, it follows that about 160,000 individuals, being the readers of said Almanack, are, in consequence, of imbibing its spirit, destitute of love one towards another.

Query. Suppose the "Christian Almanack" should continue to be read by 160,000 individuals yearly, and they, though they now "love the Saviour and are loved by him," continue destitute of love for one another, how long will it be before that period will rapidly approach when "all who love the Saviour and are loved by him shall also love one another?" And how much, on the same principle, will the Tract Society have "to enlarge their field of usefulness" before those "small differences of belief shall be forgotten in the mighty enterprise of reforming the world?" (I should rather say, how long before the world will be reformed, by the mighty enterprise of Almanack and Tract-makers?) For years past I have heard much said about reforming the world, evangelizing the world and the like, and for some ten or twelve years was fool enough to listen to the charming projects of these reformers and evangelizers, and to pay them my money whenever they called for it for this great and glorious purpose; but, at length, finding the work of evangelization progressing in a way that I could neither comprehend nor estimate, by arithmetical or any other sort of calculation, I abandoned it, and its advocates, so far as to refuse the contribution of my money in its support. Being brought to reflect a little (or a good deal, no matter which) on this subject, I have been led to inquire how a mere monied system can promise, to a Christian, the salvation of his fellow men. Looking into my Bible I find it written—"the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin;" but nowhere do I find it written that money is requisite to make the application of this cleansing power, nor that an Almanack, even a Christian Almanack, nor Tracts, even Christian Tracts, can have this effect. But, if neither an Almanack, though a Christian Almanack, nor Tracts, though Christian Tracts, can cleanse from sin, how can the community, 160,000 yearly, be cleansed from sin by Almanacks and Tracts which are invented by men who are professedly destitute of love one towards another?

It appears to me, on the whole, that the editor of the Christian Almanack, and his fellow-laborers in the vineyard of Calvinism, must "labor and pray" a great deal, and a great while, "for the rapid approach of that period when all who love the Saviour and are loved by him shall also love one another," before their labors and prayers will be answered, if the editor's supposition be correct, viz. that those who love the Saviour and are loved by him do not love one another now.

The Saviour says, "If a man love me he will keep my commandments; and this is my commandment, that ye love one another."

According to this I should suppose that "all who love the

Saviour and are loved by him" do, at the same time, love one another. I should suppose that it might be known, as well as in any way, whether men love the Saviour or not, by the love, or the want of love, which they manifest one towards another. Indeed it is written (in the Bible, not in the Almanack) "He who says he loves God, and hates his brother, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

The editor of the Christian Almanack unquestionably has some particular class of Christians in view, as being those who love the Saviour and yet do not love one another, and I leave the question with him and his 160,000 readers, whether he may not labor under a mistake and suppose those to be lovers of the Saviour who are only lovers of money, popularity, and the fame of such *mighty enterprises* as that of reforming the world by means of Tracts and Almanacks!!!

JOHN BROOKS.

## RELIGIOUS INQUIRER.

SATURDAY, October 4, 1823.

The general Convention of Universalists, convened in CLINTON, township of Paris, (N. Y.) on the 17th and 18th ult. The council was formed by choosing Br. A. Kneeland, Moderator.—Brs. R. Carrique, and N. Stacy, Clerks. There were THIRTY-FOUR Ministers present, and a numerous delegation from the various societies. Two new societies were received into fellowship, and an Association recently formed in the western part of Massachusetts called the "FRANKLIN ASSOCIATION." Three young brethren of promising talents, received the approbation of the Convention to labor in the vineyard of the Gospel, and were acknowledged as brethren, possessing precious faith, and worthy of confidence as Ministers of the grace of God; and one, Br. King, of Hudson, was ordained, as an evangelist to bear the glad tidings of everlasting life and peace to the ransomed of the Lord, according to the divine purposes of Him, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

Seven discourses were delivered on the occasion by Brs. C. G. Parsons, R. Carrique, P. Morse, J. Flagler, A. Kneeland, H. Ballou and P. Dean. The audience was numerous being estimated at more than THREE THOUSAND.—The services were rendered solemn, and divinely animating by a most excellent choir of singers led by Mr. Sanger, who displayed much judgment, taste and devotional feeling in the selection of the tunes used on the occasion, which were performed in a style rarely excelled, and very seldom equalled.

The committees appointed the last year to visit the several associations in fellowship with the Convention, made the most pleasing reports of the progress of the TRUTH in the several sections of our happy country in which they are located. The relations of the prosperity of Zion in the East and West were such as evinced the wonder working power of the spirit of God, in slaying the enmity, removing the prejudices, opening the eyes of the blind and delivering the captive who had long been bound with the galling chains of bigotry, and bowed down by the unhalloved power of ecclesiastical tyranny. Thousands and tens of thousands are rejoicing in the goodness of Almighty God, and their numbers are daily increasing; the servants of the Lord had great cause for congratulation and joy, and with the most pleasing sensations could adopt the poetic expressions of a brother.

In thy wide fields and vineyards, Lord,  
We've toil'd and wrought with watchful care;  
The wheat doth flourish by thy word,  
And love consumes the choking tare.

The reapers cry, thy fields are white,  
And ready to be gathered in;

The lab'rer shouts with sweet delight  
This is the day to finish sin.

The intelligence, received from different parts extending far and wide over this portion of God's heritage, evinced to us that the influence of the spirit of God was not confined to a particular section or town, neither was his power to be compared to a CLOUD, which for a while hangs suspended over one town and then passes to another, in one place sprinkling a few drops of rain, and in another passing over without yielding one reviving drop, thus exciting expectations, and cruelly disappointing all hopes; but as the dew which falls on the tender herb in the still silence of night refreshing the thirsty plant, so is the operation of the spirit of God, as the still small voice whispering peace to the mind, and without noise or tumult, without the threatening aspect of a destructive storm, or of a dense cloud surcharged with electric fluid ready to hurl the thunder bolt at the devoted head of some unhappy being groping in darkness, it wins the heart to God by moulding it into the divine image, which is love; chases away the darkness that obscured the mental vision; and brings man to the knowledge of that truth which maketh free.

We behold the advancement of the doctrine of God's universal love as Moses described it, when he said—"My doctrine shall drop as the rain: my speech shall distill as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass."—On this heavenly doctrine must the celebrated poet Watts have had his eye when he wrote the following inimitable lines.

As showers on meadows newly mown,  
Jesus shall send his blessings down;  
Crowned with whose life-infusing drops,  
Earth shall renew her blissful crops.

Lands, that beneath a burning sky,  
Have long been desolate and dry,  
Th' effusions of his love shall share  
And sudden greens and herbage wear.

The dews and rains, in all their store  
Drenching the pasture o'er and o'er  
Are not so copious as that grace  
Which sanctifies and saves our race.

While then others rejoice when they behold a small cloud, passing slowly along, resting for a short time on this place or that, and from whence falls only here and there a drop of water to refresh the thirsty earth or revive the drooping dying plant, what great cause of rejoicing is presented to the Universalist when he beholds the copious showers of divine grace extending from Maine to Georgia, and from the shores of the Atlantic moving o'er the mountains of the west co-extensive with civilization, and cultivation of the soil. We will then say to our brethren, rejoice in the Lord and be exceeding glad, great is His goodness, and divinely glorious his power in the salvation of man; the time is come spoken of by the Prophet; the mandate hath gone forth; the word is to Zion, "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of their habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited." Once more we say, great is our cause for rejoicing, and adopt the language of the poet

Let Zion and her sons rejoice:  
Behold the promised hour:  
Her God hath heard her mourning voice,  
And will exalt his power.

## POETRY.

*From the (N. Y.) Gospel Herald.*

### STANZAS.

There is a hope—a blessed hope—  
More precious and more bright,  
Than all the joyless mockery  
The world esteems delight.

There is a star—a lovely star—  
That lights the darkest gloom,  
And sheds a peaceful radiance o'er  
The prospect of the tomb.

There is a voice—a cheering voice—  
That lifts the soul above,  
Dispels distrustful anxious doubt,  
And whispers, "God is love!"

That voice is heard from Calv'ry's height,  
And speaks the soul forgiven—  
That star is revelation's light—  
That hope the hope of heaven. J. T. M.

### MARRIED.

In Randolph, (Vt.) Mr. EBER HYDE, of Stafford, Conn. to Miss PHILENA CONVERSE, of the former place.

### DIED.

In this City on the 25th ult. SOLOMON P. infant son of Mr. William Conner, aged one year and three months. A child, whose sweet and interesting appearance, drew forth every parental affection, and by its innocent and playful smile drew close the silken cord of love, and engaged a parent's fondest attention and regard.

Sweet innocence, divinely fair,  
A parent's love, a parent's care;  
Thy life is closed, thy race is run,  
And still that life had just begun.

Like thee, in spring the shoot appears,  
Predicting fruit in future years;  
But soon comes on the killing frost,  
And all our hopes are fled and lost.

From all the woes of earth at rest,  
In Jesus' arms supremely blest;  
Shalt thou, sweet child, in realms above,  
Enjoy thy heavenly Father's love.

H. B. C.

### NOTICE.

☞ The second Volume of the Religious Inquirer being nearly brought to a close, the agents for the paper are requested to collect and forward the money that remains due, and subscribers who are in arrears, where there are no agents, are requested immediately to forward payment. In complying with this request, agents and subscribers will confer a favor on the publishers.

### NEW PUBLICATION.

*Just received, and for sale at this Office.*

A NEW Edition of Griesbach, price three dollars.—The Greek & English Testament, (2 vols.) price four dollars. The New Testament; being the English only of the Greek and English Testament; translated from the original Greek according to Griesbach; upon the basis of the 4th London edition of the improved Version, with an attempt to further improvement from the translations of Campbell, Wakefield, Scarlett, Macknight, and Thompson.—By AENER KNEELAND, Minister of the First Independent Church of Christ, called Universalist, in Philadelphia.—Price one dollar and fifty cents.